

# *Christmas in Bayberry*

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WES ENTERED THE VERY SPACIOUS corner office. The two outside walls were glass, giving a jaw-dropping view of the city. Right now, though, Mr. Summers had his full attention. Why did Chad think he was taking over Wes's accounts?

Wes stepped up to his boss's very large oak desk. "Here's the file you requested. Everything should be in there."

"Thank you." Mr. Summers took the folder, then gestured to the two charcoal gray chairs in front of his desk. "Take a seat."

Wes was torn between doing what the president of the company wanted or speaking up about his pending meeting. After all, Mr. Summers had the final say on who got the promotion. Wes had to stay on the man's good side, but he also had to get his work done.

Wes's mouth grew dry. He swallowed hard. "Sir, I'm expected in the conference room on the twelfth floor right now."

Mr. Summers leaned forward, resting his elbows on the large oak desk. "They can wait." His gray brows drew together in a formidable line. "This is important."

Wes had no idea why Mr. Summers was so worked

up, but he couldn't help but wonder if this had something to do with the promotion. Was Chad being promoted over him?

He took a seat, perching on the edge. Then realizing he needed to appear wholeheartedly interested in what Mr. Summers said, and not ready to rush out the door at his first opportunity, Wes slid back in the chair.

Mr. Summers got to his feet. "Can I get you something to drink?"

"No, thank you."

"Well, I think I'll get something."

The man was certainly not in any rush to get this conversation over with. Maybe the promotion had been decided upon early. And if it was bad news, he didn't think Mr. Summers would waste time with pleasantries—in fact, he was quite certain of it. He wasn't one to draw out bad news.

"Sir, I want to tell you how happy I've been here at Watson & Summers for the past nine years."

"Has it been that long?"

"Yes, sir. I've learned a lot."

"That's good to hear." Mr. Summers turned with a glass of sparkling water in his hand. "I know you're up for the promotion."

"Yes, sir." He sat up straighter and smiled. "It's an amazing opportunity."

"You do know there's only one spot open and a number of strong candidates."

Wes could feel the promotion slowly slipping from his grasp. After being uprooted numerous times as a kid, moving from town to town, crisscrossing the States, he liked the thought of staying in one spot for

the rest of his life. There was something to be said for putting down roots.

But if he didn't land this promotion, he was going to have to rethink his plans. Manhattan wasn't the cheapest place to live—far from it. As of right now, he didn't have a Plan B.

Mr. Summers took a drink of water. He set the glass aside. "I have a way for you to gain an edge over the competition."

Wes couldn't help but be suspicious. Mr. Summers had never showed any favoritism toward him before, so why now? Still, he shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate this—"

Mr. Summers held up a hand to stop him. "You haven't heard the plan just yet."

Wes had a feeling there would be no chance of turning down Mr. Summers—not unless he also wanted to say goodbye to his bright future at the company. And that was not something he intended to do.

"I need you to go to Vermont."

"Vermont, sir?"

"Yes. Bayberry, Vermont, to be specific."

"Bayberry?" Wes tried to process this turn of events. First his mother, now his boss. "Have you been speaking with my mother?"

"Your mother?" Mr. Summers' forehead creased. "Why would I speak to her?"

Wes cleared his throat. "What do you have in mind, sir?"